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COMMUNIST INFILTRATION
OF MEN AND SUPPLIES INTO SOUTH VIETNAM

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FOREWORD

In this publication an attempt is made to survey and summarize the highlights of the available source material regarding the Vietnamese Communist infiltration of men and supplies into South Vietnam. It has been found that various components of the intelligence community have studied the source material and that numerous intelligence items have been written on various current aspects of the problem. Information on the infiltration problem is presented in an attempt to point out the significance and potential of the various infiltration routes and the problems of interdicting them. Also included is a statement of significant gaps that were found to exist in the available information, and it is hoped that this statement may be useful as general guidance in the collection process and in directing further research on the infiltration problem.

S-E-C-R-E-T

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Summary and Conclusions	1
I. Introduction	3
A. Terrain	3
B. Boundaries	4
II. Land Infiltration from North Vietnam	7
A. Personnel	7
B. Infiltration of Supplies	9
III. Sea Infiltration from North Vietnam	13
A. Preparations for Maritime Infiltration	14
B. Routes	14
IV. Infiltration from Cambodia into the Delta Area	17
A. Water Routes from Cambodia	18
B. Land Routes from Cambodia	19

Appendixes

Appendix A. Photographic Analysis of Possible Infiltration Routes in Laos	21
Appendix B. Border Surveillance and Patrol	23
Appendix C. Gaps in Intelligence	25
Appendix D. Source References	27

Maps

(Inside Back Cover)

- Figure 1. South Vietnam: Terrain and Transportation
- Figure 2. South Vietnam: Inland Waterways of the Mekong
Delta
- Figure 3. Communist-Controlled Areas of South Vietnam
and Communist Infiltration Routes

- v -

S-E-C-R-E-T

COMMUNIST INFILTRATION OF MEN AND SUPPLIES INTO SOUTH VIETNAM*

Summary and Conclusions

The generally rugged terrain and dense vegetation along the long border of South Vietnam offer an excellent environment for Communist infiltration into the country. The Vietnamese Communists, therefore, use a variety of routes to infiltrate men and supplies to maintain the insurgency. According to a recent report by the US Assistance Command in South Vietnam, more than 34,000 men have been infiltrated into South Vietnam during 1959 through mid-1964.** This estimate was based on a tabulation of interrogation reports of prisoners of war and appears to be a reasonable figure. Most of the men entered the northern provinces of South Vietnam from North Vietnam over mountain trails through Laos. Those infiltrators who were destined for the delta area continued south near the western border of South Vietnam. Because of the strict security maintained during the journey, the exact trails used by the infiltrators cannot be designated, but the general route can be defined. Infiltration of both men and supplies over these trails within Laos is controlled and supported by the 70th Transportation Group, which is subordinate to Hanoi. Within South Vietnam, local transportation groups are responsible for the continued movement of the infiltrators.

Less information is available regarding the various routes used to infiltrate supplies into South Vietnam, and it is impossible to estimate with precision the volume of supplies that has been or is being infiltrated during a given period. Recent information indicates, however, that a sufficient number of porters were assigned to the Laotian trail system to transport about 1 short ton per day into South Vietnam. The volume of goods that has been infiltrated over this route and over other routes probably is larger than has been previously estimated, but it is still generally believed that the Viet Cong obtain the bulk of their supplies from indigenous sources. Food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other nonmilitary supplies are obtained locally by purchase at fair prices, are grown or produced by the Viet Cong themselves, or are seized if necessary. Weapons, ammunition, and explosives have been obtained for the most part by capture from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, and small arms, mines, and grenades are fabricated by the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. A few essential ingredients for this fabrication, such as TNT and detonators, are infiltrated as are more complicated and newer types of equipment, such as communications equipment, dual-purpose machineguns, and 75-millimeter (mm) recoilless rifles. An apparently

* The estimates and conclusions in this publication represent the best judgment of this Office as of 25 February 1965.

** Information now available indicates that the total number of infiltrators during 1959 through 1964 may have been as high as 40,000 men.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

growing percentage of arms used by the Viet Cong, however, is manufactured in Bloc countries. Interrogation of prisoners and the location of supplies when captured indicate that there are two major supply infiltration routes: the trails through Laos that serve the northern provinces of South Vietnam and the routes through Cambodia that serve the area of the Mekong Delta.

Interrogated prisoners indicate that the supply route to South Vietnam through Laos consists of a well-organized porter system utilizing nearly 2,000 coolies. The porters are based at some 40 stations located one-half day's journey apart, a distance that allows them to carry a load to the next station and return within 1 day. There is no evidence that supplies which have arrived in South Vietnam on this route have been moved farther south than the Province of Kontum in the north-central part of the country. Until recently sea transport directly from North Vietnam does not appear to have been a major means used for infiltrating either men or supplies to the northern part of South Vietnam. The men entering by sea for the most part have been intelligence agents under the control of the Research Bureau of the Lao Dong Party (Communist) of North Vietnam. The large amount of military supplies captured in connection with the sinking of the Communist vessel off Cape Varella on 16 February 1965, however, indicates that sea transport may become increasingly important.

The supply system through Cambodia uses river craft on the Mekong-Bassac River complex and coastal craft in the Gulf of Siam and possibly as far along the coast as the mouth of the Mekong-Bassac Rivers. The supply operation also utilizes a porter system on forest trails, mainly through Tay Ninh Province. Supplies infiltrated on these routes appear to consist principally of food, explosive chemicals, radio equipment, medicine, and the like. Most of the movement within Cambodia is handled by smugglers and within South Vietnam by hired boat crews or Viet Cong transport units.

The northern route supplies a large number of regular Viet Cong troops in an area where local sources of supply are scarce. This supply route is comparatively long and difficult and therefore must require a larger effort than other routes. On the other hand, the Cambodian route, which supplies an area where local sources of some supplies are available, requires less effort because of the shorter supply lines and the comparative ease of water transport, which can be used to some extent. The volume of supplies moving over all routes can be expanded, depending on the amount of effort expended and the risk that the Vietnamese Communists care to take. Patrolling the land border of South Vietnam is mainly the responsibility of the South Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Groups, which consist of about 21,000 men not all of whom are located at camps along the border. These Special Forces make irregular trips along the numerous trails in the dense northern jungle and over the trails and waterways in the delta area.

- 2 -

S-E-C-R-E-T

I. Introduction

The current strength of the Viet Cong forces operating in South Vietnam is estimated to be about 33,000 hard-core troops and between 60,000 and 80,000 irregular, or part-time, forces. These forces rely for the most part on indigenous sources for food, clothing, shelter, medicine, and other nonmilitary supplies, which frequently are purchased at fair prices or grown or produced by the Viet Cong themselves, although they are seized if necessary. In areas where the Viet Cong have established firm control, they operate as a government, levying taxes and providing some services. For weapons, ammunition, explosives, and related supplies, the Viet Cong in the past have relied primarily on capture from government forces. Some stocks were left behind when the Communists withdrew in 1954, some were brought in by infiltrators, and some have been fabricated by the Viet Cong. Military items fabricated by the Viet Cong have been of two types: (1) homemade copies of US small arms (such as carbines and submachineguns), unique rifles and pistols, and grenade and rocket launchers of various types and (2) items of explosive ordnance such as antivehicle and antitank mines and offensive and defensive hand grenades, which are produced by factory methods on a small scale. To make these grenades and the various types of mines that have been captured, the Viet Cong had to procure only TNT and detonators clandestinely from outside sources or from operations against the South Vietnamese forces. Evidence now available indicates that regular supply lines have been established over which these and other clandestine supplies are obtained. The importance of the infiltration problem has been emphasized during 1964 by the increase in the tempo of Viet Cong operations in the northern area as well as in the delta area and by the use of new types of weapons (such as dual-purpose machineguns and 75-mm recoilless rifles) and ammunition not produced or reloaded in South Vietnam.

A. Terrain

The rugged terrain and geographical situation of South Vietnam offers an excellent environment and numerous opportunities for infiltration of men and supplies from adjoining areas and for clandestine movement within the country. South Vietnam is composed of the Mekong Delta, a coastal lowland, and a highland, as shown on the map, Figure 1.* The roughly triangular and virtually flat delta plain fanning out from the Mekong River measures some 300 miles along the South China Sea littoral from Pointe de Ca Mau to Baria. The whole delta area is interlaced with about 2,500 miles of navigable canals, rivers, and streams, as shown on the map, Figure 2.* The two channels of the Mekong average more than one-half mile in width throughout South Vietnam, and the land between and adjacent to them consists of large areas of marsh and paddy land. Mangrove swamps also line the rivers in some places. Even these great channels are unable to contain all the water during

* Inside back cover.

the flood season. More than one-half of the delta area is flooded each summer and autumn. Most of this area is densely populated, and local water traffic is heavy. Patrolling this expanse of water, even if only at the border and along the coast, is an enormous task. Elsewhere, particularly in the rugged northern mountains, the country is relatively undeveloped, settlements are sparse, and transportation is poor.

The coastal lowland extending northward from the delta plain varies in width from 5 to 30 miles. In places the seaward edge of the lowland is bordered by belts of sand dunes several miles wide. Spurs and outliers of the highlands encroach on the lowlands and serve as potential avenues of ingress to the interior uplands for small parties that land in the sheltered bays and anchorages along the coast. Where the highlands extend to the sea, many such sheltered landing areas are found between the promontories and the steep rocky islands offshore.

Between the coastal lowlands and the Mekong Valley lies the highland region, which extends from the southern end of Annam Mountains, just northeast of the Mekong Delta, northward into North Vietnam. North of about the 14th parallel the highlands consist mainly of steep mountain ridges with intervening deep, narrow valleys. The southern part of the highlands, however, is a complex of mountain ranges and scattered plateaus, including the Darlac and Kontum. The mountains, with some peaks above 8,000 feet, and the deeply incised parts of the plateaus make surface transportation difficult. 1/*

B. Boundaries

The land boundaries of South Vietnam extend more than 900 miles, all of which adjoin Communist-controlled or unfriendly territory. On the east and south, for a distance of about 1,500 miles, the country fronts on the South China Sea and the Gulf of Siam.

The boundary with Cambodia extends about 600 miles northeastward from the Gulf of Siam, about 460 miles of which is in the delta area and is crossed by numerous rivers and streams that are used as infiltration routes. The remainder of the boundary with Cambodia crosses forested plains and the hilly-to-mountainous western edge of the Annam Mountains. Established vehicular roads cross the Cambodian border in the delta area and in the forested plains north of Saigon, but the Viet Cong use trails to cross the border in numerous places. The entire border with Cambodia is an area of tension because of constant border clashes between the forces of both countries. Furthermore, the Cambodian government regards its boundary with South Vietnam as subject to adjustment in the southern area. 2/

* For serially numbered source references, see Appendix D.

The boundary with Laos continues generally northward for about 300 miles along the crest of the Annam Mountains. Passage across this boundary is generally tortuous, and the best trail crossings and the ones apparently used most by the Viet Cong are in the northernmost part, where the border is hilly rather than mountainous.

The demarcation line between North and South Vietnam, about 50 miles long, descends the eastern slope of the Annam Mountains and crosses hills and a narrow coastal plain to the South China Sea. Throughout most of its extent the boundary follows the center of the Ben Hai River slightly south of the 17th parallel. The demilitarized zone extends 3 miles on each side of the demarcation line. An inoperable railroad and a road cross this line, but normal traffic on these routes has been stopped by military outposts on both sides of the border. The demilitarized zone reportedly is patrolled quite frequently by the South Vietnamese armed forces and is inspected occasionally by a representative of the International Control Commission.

The full extent to which the Communists take advantage of the opportunities for penetration of these land and sea boundaries is unknown, but apparently all possible routes have been used to some extent in the past. The available information indicates that at present certain parts of the borders probably are more significant than others for infiltration of men and material.

S-E-C-R-E-T

II. Land Infiltration from North Vietnam

Recent information obtained from interrogation of prisoners of war and from a summary of the information accumulated since 1959, prepared by the United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam and released in October 1964, indicates that a large number of the infiltrators arrived in South Vietnam through Laos. These reports also indicate that the same general route was used for a considerable amount of the supplies which arrived in the northern provinces of South Vietnam. This information from prisoners of war in general is considered to be valid and constitutes one of the primary sources on which an assessment of the infiltration can be based. Captured documents have provided some information concerning infiltration, especially concerning infiltration that took place during the earlier years.

A. Personnel

The recent report of the Assistance Command estimated that as many as 34,000 men probably were infiltrated from North Vietnam into South Vietnam during 1959 through mid-1964. 3/ This estimate was based on data obtained from the interrogation of 187 prisoners who provided information on their own infiltration group and, in many cases, on several other groups. Although some of the data, particularly those obtained from infiltrators who described other infiltration groups, are subject to a considerable margin of error, the estimated total of 34,000 men appears to be a reasonable achievement for a well-organized infiltration program. The infiltrators consisted of military, political, security, proselytizing, economic, financial, and education specialists. Only about 2,600 of the 34,000 were reported to be civilians; the remainder were military personnel. The number declined in 1963 but may have risen substantially in 1964. The following tabulation taken from the report of the Assistance Command shows the distribution of infiltrators by year and indicates that the largest number entered in 1962.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Approximate Number of Military and Civilian Infiltrators</u>
1959-60	4,600
1961	5,400
1962	12,800
1963	6,400
1964 (January-July)	4,700*
Total (rounded)	<u>34,000</u>

Before leaving North Vietnam, the infiltrators received training for 45 days to 6 months. The major training center appeared to be

* Information obtained 23 February 1965 indicates the total number of infiltrators during 1964 may have been more than 10,000 men.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

located at Xuan Mai and was under the direct control of the General Staff of the Peoples Army of Vietnam, although the 338th Infantry Brigade provided instructors and housekeeping support. 4/ Another major training center was located at Son Tay, and other groups reportedly were trained in various other cities, such as Gia Lam, Ha Dong, Vinh, and Haiphong. The infiltrators received political and economic instruction and military training in the use of different types of weapons, ambush techniques, jungle warfare, and the like. Some groups received specialized training in such subjects as demolition and the use of 70-mm howitzers. The men also practiced marching over different types of terrain and carrying packs.

On leaving the training center, each infiltrator was issued some clothing, including a khaki uniform and black pajamas, some dry food, simple medicines, and a few small items of camping equipment. The group usually was issued a radio and some weapons consisting of pistols, rifles, carbines, grenades, submachineguns, machineguns, automatic rifles, and recoilless rifles.

The infiltration route through Laos to the border of South Vietnam was reported by the infiltrators to be under North Vietnamese control. This segment of the trip was organized and conducted by the 70th Transportation Group, which is directly subordinate to Hanoi and has controlled the infiltration of men and materials along the route since the beginning of 1959. According to an infiltrator captured in April 1964, the 70th Transportation Group operated with about 400 men in 1959 and probably was increased in 1961 to about 2,000 men, who were responsible for about 20 communications-liaison stations. 5/

The infiltration trip usually required between 45 days and 4 months. The infiltrators did not walk every day but spent some days resting. Individuals who became ill remained at a station until well while the rest of the group continued the trip. The personnel who maintained stations all along the routes issued or sold rice to the infiltrators and cared for those who were sick. The men were led over the trails by communications-liaison personnel who normally changed between stations. Security was very strict -- the infiltrators were forbidden to talk with civilians, to discuss their location with the guides, or to keep a diary. As a result, the captured infiltrators usually were unable to identify the exact dates on which they traveled or the locations of the trails and stations. They also were required to take precautions to avoid being discovered by unfriendly individuals. Before leaving North Vietnam, each person changed his uniform and left behind everything with North Vietnamese markings.

Apparently the route used by the infiltrators was not a single trail system but involved a complex of trails within the infiltration corridor.* Use of a particular trail was determined by the weather,

* For photographic interpretation of the trail network, see Appendix A, and for the general location of the trails and for names of South Vietnamese provinces, see the map, Figure 3, inside back cover.

S-E-C-R-E-T

activities of the South Vietnamese forces, or Viet Cong logistic and operational requirements. Although ground observers in Laos indicated that about 4,000 men (of whom 2,000 were identified as Vietnamese Communists) were moved south by truck toward the Tchepone area in the first half of 1964, 6/ none of the infiltrators captured by mid-1964 claimed to have been among them.* It appears from available interrogation reports that infiltrators were trucked down route 1 a short distance past Dong Hoi and then southwest to a point north of the demilitarized zone and east of Laos. From this point the men walked southwest, probably through the tip of the demilitarized zone into Laos** and then south along the Laotian - South Vietnamese and Cambodian - South Vietnamese borders, crossing into South Vietnam at different points. Most of the men who infiltrated in 1963 and 1964, including those destined for the southern highland provinces, reportedly entered South Vietnam in the northern province of Thua Thien near the boundary between this province and Quang Nam. There have been some reports from Laotians that the infiltrators moved southward on trails paralleling route 23 (south of route 9) and then on trails paralleling route 16 north of Attapeu. Available interrogation reports, however, did not support these reports on the movement of infiltrators in this area, although it is possible that the route was used by men who have not yet been captured. Similarly it is possible that some infiltrators have crossed the demilitarized zone directly into South Vietnam in 1963 and 1964, but available interrogation reports do not indicate the use of this route.

B. Infiltration of Supplies

There is a scarcity of information on the overland supply of weapons, ammunition, and other military supplies from North Vietnam to the northern province of South Vietnam. There are, however, a few unconfirmed reports from infiltrators and observers and slightly more detail from former members of Communist transportation groups. Although interrogations of the latter revealed the organization of the transportation system, they did not reveal the routes used, nor did they provide sufficient information on which to base an estimate of the volume of material that was transported. These interrogation reports indicated, however, that the volume of goods that has been transported, at least as far south as Kontum Province, could have been considerable.

As mentioned above, the 70th Transportation Group was responsible for the transportation of goods and the guidance of infiltrators along the corridor from Quang Binh (the southernmost province in North Vietnam) through Laos to the border of Thua Thien Province, South

* It is possible that the number of men on the trucks was exaggerated or that the infiltrators had not been captured as yet. It is also possible that these personnel are still in Laos.

** A recent North Vietnamese map indicates that most of this route is in territory now claimed as North Vietnamese.

Vietnam. The 70th Transportation Group had two companies whose function was to protect the infiltration corridor. The transport system had about 40 stations located one-half day's march apart. The short distances, anywhere from 4 to 12 miles, depending on terrain and tactical situation, allowed the coolies to haul the material to the next station and return to their home station within 1 working day.

A relatively large number of men, about 400 to 600 men for every 10 stations, were required to handle the material. In order to estimate the amount that this supply system could have delivered to South Vietnam, it can be assumed that about 2,000 porters were available and were evenly distributed between the 40 stations, or about 50 porters serving each station. It also can be assumed that each porter carried 38 pounds (which is an average of the Communist planning figures for normal loads -- 55 pounds of rice carried in level country and 22 pounds of arms carried in mountainous terrain). Thus the 50 porters in the final segment of the route could have delivered 1,900 pounds, or about 1 short ton daily.

At the border of Thua Thien Province, the responsibility for the movement of men and material shifted to the 72d Transportation Group, which controlled 26 stations from Thua Thien through Quang Nam Province to southern Quang Tin Province. 7/ This group reportedly was subordinate to the communications-liaison section of the headquarters of Military Region 5 and had at least 1,500 men. This group also had at least one security company responsible for protection of the communications-liaison corridor. The existence of another group, operating south and east of the 72d Transportation Group in Kontum and Quang Ngai Provinces, was indicated in a captured Viet Cong document. Although there are units in the southern highlands suspected to be transport security units, no information is available to indicate that supplies are moved from the north to the area south of Kontum Province.

The information regarding these transport groups was received from only a few prisoners, but it is supported in part by other infiltrators. Several infiltrators have reported that while traveling in Laos between route 9 and Thua Thien they saw supplies being carried by men and on bicycles and carts at certain points. One man reported seeing bicycles at one place that could carry about 500 pounds. 8/ There also were reports from Laotian villagers in 1964 of coolie trains carrying ammunition, heavy weapons, and supplies along trails from near the end of the demilitarized zone to route 9 at both the Tchepone area and also closer to the South Vietnam border. These villagers reported that some of the groups were destined for South Vietnam. These coolie trains may have been part of the supply system of the 70th Transportation Group. The available reports, however, are too general and scattered to allow a determination of the whole picture of the Viet Cong overland supply system.

It is interesting to note that infiltrators and supply trains have not been intercepted at the border. Because of the rugged terrain and dense jungle, the border cannot be guarded by patrolling parallel to the boundary line. Moreover, the area of South Vietnam through which the trails pass is for the most part controlled by the Viet Cong. Some trails in the border area are patrolled irregularly by the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) that has been trained by the South Vietnamese Special Forces and advised by the US Special Forces. Many of the 21,000 men in the CIDG are located at camps along the border of South Vietnam.* Other than that provided by the CIDG, border defense is limited to that provided by a few regular army units located at permanent posts such as those on routes 1A and 9 at the boundary line.

* For details on the organization and duties of the CIDG, see Appendix B.

S-E-C-R-E-T

III. Sea Infiltration from North Vietnam

Analysis of the available information indicates that until recently sea infiltration directly from North Vietnam was not a major means of supplying Viet Cong elements in the northern provinces. In the past, men, ammunition, weapons (including antiaircraft guns), radio equipment, and other supplies reportedly were transported to South Vietnam by water. The description of these items was very vague, however, and the amounts transported by water for any given period or even by any one ship could not be estimated with reliability. The men infiltrated were mainly intelligence agents rather than military personnel. The lack of information in the past, however, is not conclusive evidence that sea infiltration was not a major means of supplying the Viet Cong in the northern provinces. The scarcity of accurate information probably was due in part to the security procedures used by the Communists and to the problems of intercepting the sea infiltration. The South Vietnamese naval patrol is limited in number and effectiveness,* and the volume of normal junk traffic to be inspected is large. There are more than 40,000 junks** operating along the 1,500 miles of South Vietnam's coast. In addition, North Vietnam has between 5,000 and 8,000 coastal junks that could be used for maritime infiltration, although it apparently has never used more than a fraction of this number for infiltration purposes. 11/ Furthermore, it takes a junk only a few days to sail from the 17th parallel to almost any place on the coast of South Vietnam.

The recent capture of a large cache of weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies in connection with the sinking of a Communist vessel off Cape Varella on 16 February 1965 indicates that the supply pattern could be changing and larger quantities of material may be arriving by sea directly from North Vietnam. Documents captured with the materials clearly revealed that the shipment came from North Vietnam, although the weapons were mostly of Communist Chinese manufacture. The supposition that sea shipments may become more important is reinforced by the fact that the Viet Cong are being reequipped with weapons that will require ammunition not available in South Vietnam. Therefore, the Viet Cong must expect to have a larger flow of supplies arriving from sources outside of South Vietnam. Such a flow could most easily be maintained by sea.

* Although the ability of this fleet to intercept Communist craft has been improved by the addition of new junks, the improvement of maintenance of the fleet, and the increased discipline of the crewmen, they are still too few for the area to be patrolled. Also, the Communists have increased the speed and size of their craft. 9/

** As of January 1962, 40,206 junks and boats, each with a capacity of less than 60 tons, had been registered under the junk control program. 10/

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

A. Preparations for Maritime Infiltration

Although at one time there appeared to be at least three organizations responsible for waterborne infiltration from North to South Vietnam, in mid-1964 it appears that this activity was under the supervision of the Research Bureau of the Lao Dong (Communist) Party of North Vietnam. This bureau, often referred to as the Central Intelligence Bureau, in turn supervised a Maritime Transportation Office, which controlled two or more provincial maritime infiltration units. These units controlled three cells each, each cell consisting of one boat and its crew.

The Research Bureau was responsible for making all arrangements for waterborne infiltration such as preparing itineraries and time schedules; selecting, training, and briefing crew members and infiltrators and supplying them with forged identification papers; and debriefing returning members of infiltrating groups.

Selection of crew members and infiltrators was made on the basis of several criteria. For example, the men selected had to be between 35 and 45 years old, in good health, members of the lowest social class, and imbued with the Communist dogma. 12/ Crew members received Communist political indoctrination and training in the use of firearms, sabotage techniques, boxing, and judo. 13/ Infiltrators for special jobs, such as radio communications, received additional training when necessary.

The boats used in maritime infiltration apparently were primarily junks obtained from South Vietnam in the provinces of Quang Tri or Quang Nam. 14/ There are about 17 different types of junks in these two provinces. 15/ Recent reports have stated that motor boats and submarines also have been used for infiltration purposes. According to available reports, sightings of submarines have been very rare and seem to have taken place from January through May 1964. 16/ One report mentions the possibility that vessels with low superstructures may have been mistaken for submarines. 17/

B. Routes

The entire coastline of South Vietnam is open to infiltration by sea. One informant, who served as a crewman and boat captain for 6 years, said that it is possible to land at any place in South Vietnam at which a boat can anchor. He listed 40 such places. 18/ This type of infiltration is possible when it is "legal," -- that is, when up to two agents are being transported to a specific port or ports in South Vietnam and all persons on the boat have been provided with false documents of the Republic of Vietnam.

In general, the routes taken have depended on the type of mission, the time of year, and the location of South Vietnamese patrol boats.

S-E-C-R-E-T

S-E-C-R-E-T

Two types of routes were referred to by the informant mentioned above. 19/ A "near-shore" route, paralleling the coast at about 3 miles offshore, was used for "legal" infiltration missions. A "distant-shore" route, ranging from 50 to 100 miles from the coast, was used for "semi-legal" infiltrations. (A "semi-legal" infiltration is one involving more than two agents and/or large amounts of equipment, although the same types of identification papers are required as are used for a "legal" infiltration.) Infiltration trips were made only from December through August, except for emergencies, because of the rough seas usually encountered from September through November. December through April or May was said to have been the period during which most attempts at "semi-legal" infiltration took place. By the beginning of August, boats usually went no farther south than Binh Dinh Province, and by mid-August no farther south than the town of Da Nang. 20/ The Communists seem to be well informed on locations and movements of South Vietnamese patrol boats, and the location of these boats often determines the routes that will be taken by the Communist junks. On 22 December 1961, for example, a barrier patrol composed of US and South Vietnamese naval ships was established along the 17th parallel to intercept infiltrators from the North. During the initial phase of the operation, several suspicious junks were picked up, but in less than 2 months the number of suspicious junks decreased markedly, and Communist activities indicated use of a sea route around the end of the barrier patrol. 21/

S-E-C-R-E-T

IV. Infiltration from Cambodia into the Delta Area

The vagueness of the borderline between Cambodia and South Vietnam and the large number of people moving about in the border area complicate the patrol of the area. The border runs generally through ricefields and scraggy timber and between villages that normally trade with each other. Smuggling across this border, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, is common and provides a traditional livelihood for a number of people. The Viet Cong use Cambodia as a safe haven and as a source of supplies by taking advantage of the poorly defined and lightly patrolled border, of the political hostility between the two countries, and of the experienced smugglers. The extent to which the Cambodian government cooperates with, or is aware of, Viet Cong activities within its borders is not known, but it is quite likely that Viet Cong activities in Cambodia are well concealed.

The Viet Cong probably have not set up large training camps, hospitals, and the like in Cambodia, [REDACTED]

25X1

[REDACTED] but they appear to have set up ad hoc camps, hospitals, and rest havens on a small scale. Captured Viet Cong have reported that Viet Cong installations were located on Cambodian soil and that small bands of Viet Cong (more than 30 in one report) have based themselves in Cambodia and raided South Vietnam villages over the border. 22/

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Based on investigations by US advisory personnel, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] and on the fact that significant quantities of explosives have been captured, it is obvious that the Viet Cong have received considerable quantities of important war supplies through Cambodia. The infiltration occurred by land trails, by rivers and canals, and by coastal craft.* The logistics routes used for border crossing were well organized, as in the case of the northern mountain trails, and the rules and means of transport varied according to the situation existing in the areas to be infiltrated.

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* The coastal craft based on the islands in the Gulf of Siam may range as far around the south coast as the mouths of the Soirap, Mekong, and Bassac Rivers, an area that is said to be under nearly complete control of the Viet Cong. Sea infiltration from North Vietnam reportedly has not occurred south of Saigon. 23/ It is obvious, however, that the Viet Cong do receive supplies from that direction because Viet Cong porters have been captured transporting the supplies away from the coast in that area. These supplies either arrived from Cambodia or North Vietnam or were unloaded directly from oceangoing vessels coming from Communist China or other Communist countries. Of these alternatives, arrival by small craft from Cambodia is the most likely because of the short distance involved and the ease of arranging contact with the Viet Cong in South Vietnam.

The supplies infiltrated from Cambodia appear to have consisted for the most part of explosive chemicals, radio equipment, medical supplies, and food. Other reports indicate that ammunition and guns also may have been moved across the border. Various sources state that the Viet Cong can easily purchase drugs and some military supplies in Phnom Penh and other Cambodian towns and foodstuffs from Cambodians in the border area. It appears that established importing firms in Phnom Penh, some of which probably are Communist fronts, have imported some of the necessary supplies as part of Cambodia's normal trade through the ports of Sihanoukville, Kampot, and Phnom Penh. Recently about 20 to 25 international vessels have arrived at Phnom Penh monthly after passing through South Vietnam on the Mekong River. It is quite possible that some of these vessels have carried material destined for the Viet Cong, and it is suspected that some cargo has been dropped off in South Vietnam at night.

In November 1964 the South Vietnamese government began implementing a decree to control traffic on the Mekong River. Regulations now being enforced provide that (1) foreign ships transiting the river must apply on arrival for authorization -- military craft through diplomatic channels and commercial craft through customs; (2) commercial vessels which have come from a Communist port, which carry the flag of a country that does not have diplomatic representation in Saigon, or which carry munitions or military hardware shall not be allowed transit; (3) holds of commercial craft may be inspected and sealed by customs; and (4) all vessels must move during daylight hours and can halt at only four designated points.

A. Water Routes from Cambodia

Two major water routes have been used by the Viet Cong -- the Mekong-Bassac River complex and the coastal route involving the islands in the Gulf of Siam. More than 22 short tons of explosives were captured by the South Vietnamese patrols on the rivers during the last 9 months of 1963. ^{24/} More materials have been captured on the river route than on the coastal route, but it is harder to capture material that is moved on the coastal route. Although the Mekong supply line appears to be operated by smugglers whose normal job it is to smuggle all kinds of goods across the border, their operations appear to be well organized and, in the context of a guerrilla war, have been of substantial magnitude.

A description of the logistics system on the river route was revealed by a Vietnamese junk crew that was captured on the Mekong River near the border. ^{25/} The explosives were smuggled from Phnom Penh on a ship to a point within 1 mile of the border. The explosives were then transferred to small junks of 2 or 3 tons capacity that were manned by men hired to take the junks downstream at night to about 5 miles below the border from where other crews took over. In the first 3 months of 1963, about 3 to 5 short tons of explosives were transported almost every other day in this fashion by one or two boats. The materials were well

camouflaged in sacks under layers of sand, salt, or fruit, or in false bottoms and tops of the boats. If the hired crews asked what the boat carried, they were given false information. [redacted] the Viet Cong man the boats themselves when certain material such as rifles and ammunition is being transported. 26/

Although less material has been captured along the coastal route, it could be equally important. The Communists reportedly had a supply organization at the port of Kampot, Cambodia, from which the imported supplies were moved to supply dumps on the northern side of Phu Quoc island. The Viet Cong used large motorized junks to distribute it into the delta waterways. Although representatives of the United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam who talked to local officials in this area found that there was little hard evidence to support this thesis, they found a strong belief that as many as three fairly large junks left Cambodia each month carrying ammunition on this route. 27/

The problem of control of the water traffic on both routes is complicated by the large number of watercraft normally operating on these routes. On the inland waterways of South Vietnam there is an estimated total of 8,000 junks, barges, and river vessels in addition to innumerable sampans. Although commercial traffic between South Vietnam and Cambodia has been reduced greatly in the past several years, numerous inland craft and oceangoing vessels normally move up and down the Mekong. Not enough patrol boats have been made available in the past to control traffic on the Mekong and on the various canals and streams nearby. Reportedly, only two customs boats were available in April 1963 to patrol the Mekong in the border area. 28/

B. Land Routes from Cambodia

The major land routes from Cambodia, which enter South Vietnam through Tay Ninh Province, have been used to transport weapons, ammunition, and other military equipment. Two routes enter the province from the north, one from the west, and one from the south. The Viet Cong reportedly have assembled as many as 300 porters at one time to carry their supplies across the border. 29/ Interrogation reports indicate that the porters have made regular trips into Cambodia in this area to receive supplies that have been transported to the supply point by oxcart. 30/ To avoid trouble, when the Viet Cong were in Cambodian territory, they kept their porters from going near Cambodian outposts.

An Giang Province, located on the south side of the Mekong at the border, is another area through which land supply routes possibly pass. According to a commander of the Takeo* Provincial Guard in Cambodia in March 1963, Viet Cong crossed the border almost nightly. He also stated that supplies usually are taken to the border and there picked up by the Viet Cong. 31/ Although this supply route has not been

* Takeo Province is located opposite An Giang Province, South Vietnam.

confirmed by the capture of supplies or porters, captured Viet Cong have reported that they had made numerous border crossings for the purpose of taking refuge on Cambodian soil, 32/ indicating that the border is open to infiltration.

APPENDIX A

PHOTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF POSSIBLE INFILTRATION ROUTES IN LAOS

The border areas of Laos and North and South Vietnam have been examined by photographic interpreters for routes that might be used for land infiltration of men and supplies from North Vietnam into South Vietnam. The photographic analysis located only one truckable road (route 9) crossing the Laotian - South Vietnamese border, and this road was said not to have been maintained for about 6 miles on the Laotian side and for a short distance on the Vietnamese side. The photographic interpreters were able to discover innumerable trails along the Laotian - South Vietnamese border, most of which were in Laos, but were unable to state that all trails in the area had been located, because of the dense jungle cover. It was the opinion of the photographic interpreters that the analysis did, however, minimize the possibility of the existence of any network of trails that was not discovered.

Two sets of networks of trails along the border were located. One of these is centered about 40 miles east-southeast of Tchepone near Phou Ke Lo [] and the other about 45 miles north-northeast of Attoupeu near Kong Nang []. Of the trails located by photography in the Phou Ke Lo area, about 16 crossed the border, whereas only about 5 of the trails in the Kong Nang area crossed the border, and reportedly none of the trails was jeepable. The trails were mostly very narrow, being less than 5 feet wide, generally suitable only for foot and pack-animal traffic. Parts of some trails, especially in the areas near large villages or new villages, appeared to be from 5 to 7 feet wide. Such a width means that they possibly could accommodate animal-drawn carts, jeeps, and small trucks on those sections. Most of the trails were natural surfaced and unimproved. A few narrow foot bridges were seen, but most of the streams would have to be forded or crossed by boats. Almost none of the bridges would hold jeeps or trucks. In the area east of Attoupeu, one trail crosses the border into South Vietnam, but this leads to a road that connects with route 14 at Kong Hojao []

APPENDIX B

BORDER SURVEILLANCE AND PATROL

The South Vietnamese Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) has the primary responsibility for the surveillance and patrol of the more than 900-mile South Vietnamese border with Laos and Cambodia. The CIDG has about 21,000 men who are recruited in the local area to which they will be assigned and who are trained by the South Vietnamese Special Forces. About 800 members of the US Special Forces have acted as advisers to the CIDG, and the number of US advisers is soon to be increased to about 1,300 men.

Units of the CIDG are located principally along the inland border, with a few units located in other strategic areas. The basic operating units are called "A" detachments, of which there were about 40 as of 15 November 1964. "B" teams have command duties over about four to eight "A" detachments, and "C" teams command and control about four "B" teams. The CIDG is responsible to the South Vietnamese army only at the corps level.

The CIDG currently is undergoing expansion and relocation. It cannot be determined as yet whether the change will make the CIDG any more effective against Communist infiltration. The following quotation from a letter of instruction to the Commanders of A, B, and C operational detachments, dated 7 November 1964, sets forth their objectives and missions:

The Special Force/CIDG Program is a phased and combined military-civil counterinsurgency effort designed to accomplish the following objectives: (a) destroy the Viet Cong and create a secure environment; (b) establish firm governmental control over the population; and (c) enlist the population's active and willing support of, and participation in, the government's programs.

These objectives are accomplished while executing any one of these possible assigned missions: (a) border surveillance and control, (b) operations against infiltration routes, or (c) operations against Viet Cong war zones and bases.

APPENDIX C

GAPS IN INTELLIGENCE

The most serious gap in intelligence regarding Communist infiltration of South Vietnam is information on the Communist supply system. Information on the infiltration of men has been accumulated, but very little information on the supply system has been confirmed. Information is needed on the type and quantity of supplies now stored in South Vietnam and their sources of external supply. It is known that a supply system has been organized on trails through Laos, but information is needed on which to base an estimate of the volume of supplies that this system has delivered in the past, what kinds of materials have been delivered, and the capacity of the system. The same information is needed on the land and water supply routes that operate through Cambodia. More specific information also is needed regarding the exact location of the land routes and the particular area of the rivers and coastal waters used for infiltration. Details on the operating methods and on the type of vehicles and craft used would help in the estimating of the total capability of the supply system.

Although information currently available does not indicate that any significant volume of material or large number of men has been infiltrated by sea directly from North Vietnam, the fact remains that the Communists have considerable opportunity to do so. More information is needed to continue checking on this mode of infiltration and to be sure that it has not been or does not become more significant.

More information is needed on the activities of the Viet Cong in Cambodia and on the help they receive from importers and smugglers. Information also is needed on the extent to which the Cambodian government is aware of this activity.

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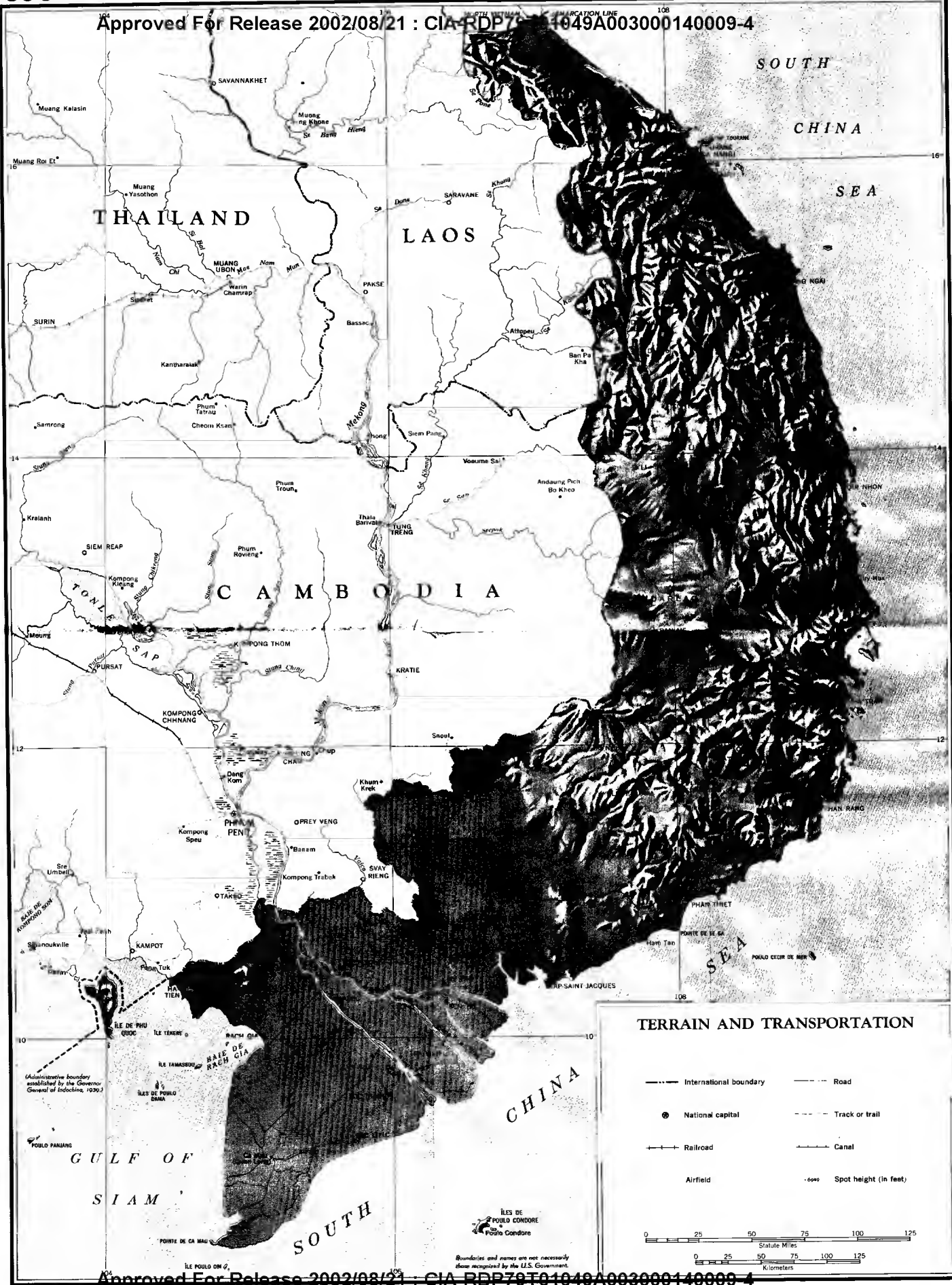
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SOUTH VIETNAM

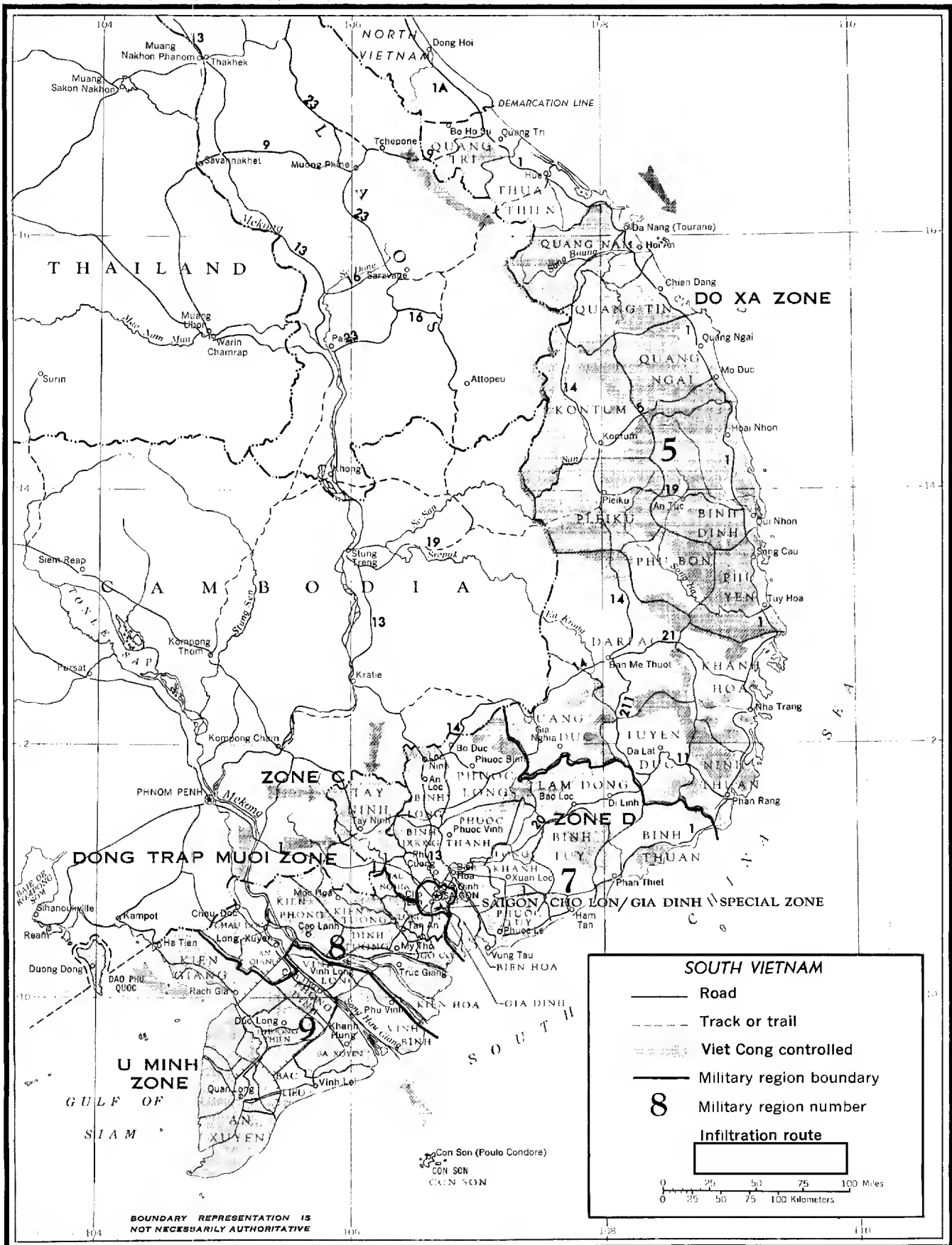
Figure 1



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Figure 3

Approved For Release 2002/08/21 : CIA-RDP79T01049A003000140009-4
COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED AREAS OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND COMMUNIST INFILTRATION ROUTES



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